



ict@innovation

Planning the FOSS Certification Component

FOSS Certification Email Survey

The objective of the email survey was to find out about FOSS certification needs in different countries, and to get some assessments on the demand for different types of FOSS skills and certifications. The survey received responses from trainers, universities, training institutions in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, and South Africa.

We have grouped skills levels in:

- desktop skills (like Open Office)
- system administration skills (like system, server, network administration)
- particular developer / programming skills (like web development, database, ..)
- additional IT skills (IT security ...)

First set of questions: FOSS training and certification at your institutions

According to the responses, training at the system / network / server administration level is most popular, followed by desktop and web development skills.

Some of the institutions among the respondents want to offer courses to prepare for the LPI certification (sys admin level); some are in (longer) negotiations already with LPI to become training partner. Some institutions offer their own local certificates.

Second set of questions: ICT markets in the respective countries

ICT skills in general and FOSS skills in particular are in demand throughout all skills levels. The LAMP stack (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) comes out as the set of systems that are particularly needed and the respective skills are required accordingly.

FOSS skills needs mostly come up in the private sector, as decisions to migrate to / set up networks and servers based on FOSS increase, mostly because of cost factors.

Third set of questions: Demand for FOSS / ICT training

Again, here the system admin level was mentioned as the one most in demand, followed by the other components of the LAMP stack, as well as desktop skills.

Outcomes of the FOSS certification planning workshop and related research

ict@innovation invited about 20 people with expertise and experience in FOSS training and/or certification from different African countries to a workshop in Johannesburg, from 15 – 17 October 2008.

During 3 days, the participants shared experiences with FOSS training and certification in different contexts and countries. They discussed approaches to address FOSS certification in Africa, and debated their views on how the ict@innovation component on FOSS certification could ideally and realistically be designed.

In summary, the workshop discussions produced some building blocks for the ict@innovation component on FOSS certification, which will run for 2 years, from 2009 to 2010:

- The group agreed, that there are training needs at all FOSS skills levels, from desktop skills (Open Office etc.) to system administration to particular programming skills (like web development, database etc.). As a starting point for ict@innovation, the group recommended training and certification at the **system administration level** to have most leverage and impact. There is a particular lack of skills to manage networks and servers, and also sys admin skills provide a solid basis for further FOSS developer and training skills. The **LPI (Linux Professional Institute) certification** was selected as the product to use to build training and certification skills over the coming 2 years. This discussion outcome was in line with the results of the [email-based survey](#) that ict@innovation conducted in preparation of the workshop.
- While the LPI certification was endorsed as a vendor neutral and quality certification, **improvements on the exam itself** were suggested. The exam should ideally provide evidence of practical sys admin and problem solving skills. Online work on a virtual server was agreed to be a desired scenario for an improved LPI exam.
- **Openly licensed online training materials** for LPI were seen as a way to reduce training and certification costs, to increase access to FOSS skills, to keep training materials up to date and relevant, and to reach put to a larger scale of the population with FOSS training.
- It was differentiated between **short term realistic** and **long term ideal objectives**. With the objective of creating a critical mass of trained and certified people in different African countries within the 2 year programme duration, the adoption of an existing international certification was agreed on. However, in the long term, **sustainable organizational structures** need to be created, that deal with FOSS certification at a



pan-African level. An African certifying body should take care of promotion, accreditation and endorsement of a portfolio of FOSS certifications. As much of training and certification fees should ideally remain on the continent and support the African certifying body.

- A **coordinated approach to FOSS certification at a pan-African level** was seen as vital to avoid past mistakes of individual negotiations which so far have all not reached desired scales of training and certification.

ict@innovation is currently in the process of building a detailed programme out of the solid recommendations that resulted from the workshop. Thanks again to all participants for their great and valuable input!

The [results of the email survey](#), as well as of the [online forum on FOSS certification](#) also serve as planning input to the programme design. Thanks to all who have shared their experiences and views!

If you would like to share additional views, are interested to partner in the programme, or would like to become a FOSS certification training organization in the context of ict@innovation, please [let us know](#).